DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 636 RC 012 480

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TITLE Improving Education in Rural America: Past Efforts, Future Opportunities - The Study Methodology.
INSTITUTION Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Sep 80
CONTRACT 400-77-0081
NOTE 51p.: For related documents, see ED 192 992 and RC 012 479.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Case Studies; Data Analysis; Data Collection; *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Experimental Programs; Field Studies; National Programs; National Surveys; *Research Design; *Research Methodology; *Rural Education; Technical Assistance

ABSTRACT

The methodology used during the 2-year project involving 14 case studies of rural education improvement programs consisted of 4 sets of overlapping activities: (1) gearing up and completing the study design; (2) site visits, data collection, and case study write ups; (3) data analysis; and (4) technical assistance. The gearing up period was devoted to research existing programs, identifying team members and their responsibilities, and selecting the programs to be studied. Site visits lasted from three to five days for data collection and report writing, with return visits required to three of the locations. Data analysis was continuous throughout the two year period, and all information was reviewed upon completion of the project. A minimum of technical assistance was used during the first year, and approximately 10% of the principal investigator's time was devoted to technical assistance during the second year. Reflections on the methodology revealed four conditions which contribute to the quality of such studies as being: an experienced principal investigator; a well-developed conceptual framework; a carefully selected study team; and time and money. Methodology for future similar studies is recommended, and appendices to the narrative include descriptions of the case studies and the design work session. (JD)

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IMPROVING EDUCATION IN RURAL AMERICA: PAST EFFORTS, FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES - THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

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Contract #400-77-0081

September 1980

RC012480

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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IMPROVING EDUCATION IN RURAL AMERICA: PAST EFFORTS, FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES - THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study, "Improving Education in Rural America, Past Efforts, Future Opportunities", consisted of four sets of overlapping activities: (1) Gearing up and completing the study design; (2) site visits/data collection and case study write ups for book manuscript; (3) data analysis, writing introductory and final chapters of manuscript; (4) technical assistance.

Gearing Up Activities: The first four months of the study were devoted to (a) searching the literature and making telephone contacts to identify existing and recently completed rural education improvement programs, (b) identifying team members and negotiating working arrangements for working on the study, and (c) taking the next steps in working through a study design. Brief descriptions of 20 of the most promising programs for study were written up for consideration at the first work session held January 30, 31, 1978 (Appendix A). During the two-day work session, the five consultants, James Branscome, Dan Cromer, Faith Dunne, Robert Herriott and Milbrey McLaughlin, along with Charles Thompson, NIE program officer, and the principal investigator, Paul Nachtigal, worked through the final study design, selected ten of the 20 programs for study and established tentative assignments and dates for site visits. (Appendix B)

Had everything gone as planned, the above activities could have been accomplished in three rather than four months. The holidays and schedule conflicts of consultants prevented the holding of the first work session at an earlier date.

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Site Visits/Data Collection: Key people of programs selected for study were contacted by telephone, presented with some background information on the study and requests were made for including the site in the study. Follow up letters were sent; all projects contacted agreed to participate, although a couple with some hesitancy.

The study design called for one consultant team member and the principal investigator to visit each program, allowing three to five days for each site. The consultant would have primary responsibility for writing the case study, leaving the principal investigator free to focus on the larger cross-project issues. Building the site visit schedule around availability of consultant time and suitable dates for program sites resulted in the majority of field work taking place in sequential weeks, late in the spring.

Reviewing initial case study write ups and reflecting on the adequacy of the study design, were the major topics of a second work session held July 23-25, 1978. The general impressions were that the site visits had gone well with useful/rich data being collected. There were, however, three of the projects where the data was not complete and return visits were needed. In looking at the larger picture of rural education improvement, it was also clear that in examining only large, heavily funded programs, an important rural school improvement activity was not being included, e.g., the small-scale, locally-initiated efforts which while more difficult to identify, might be of equal significance in the total picture of rural education. The decision was made to try to identify and include in the study three to five small-scale programs. An

additional team member, Tom Gjelten, was added to conduct the site visits and to prepare the case studies on these programs. (For a list of all projects included, see Appendix C.)

A third work session held February 12-13, 1979, was spent reviewing case studies, discussing the issues and findings emerging from the cases and establishing a work schedule for completing the study. And although the deadlines were established with the best of intentions, they proved to be impossible to meet, resulting in a difficult and time consuming request for a no-cost time extension.

Analysis of Data: As with the preceding two phases, there was no definite break between finishing the data collection and beginning the analysis. Just as the study design continued to evolve through most of the study, the analysis began as soon as site visits were completed and case study drafts available. Late summer, however, was set aside for a concerted effort by McLaughlin and Nachtigal to work through the analysis section and have it available for the final work session held October 29-30, 1979. In addition to reviewing the final chapters, case studies were reviewed one more time to determine if the stories were told in the best possible way and if not what additional work was needed before submitting the work to publishers.

Technical Assistance: The technical assistance work was not as extensive as anticipated in the RFP or the original proposal. Very little effort went into technical assistance the first year, approximately 10% of the principal investigator's time was devoted to technical assistance the second year. It is not surprising that

there were few demands for technical assistance during the early part of the project. By design the study was given little publicity, and more importantly, one needs a good sense of the study's findings before one has a real contribution to make to the field. Unfortunately, the demands for technical assistance increase when the principal investigator should be spending most of his time thinking through and writing about the study's findings. If the requested technical assistance is related directly to the effort, e.g., responding requests to prepare papers for different agencies, such activities can be helpful, forcing the analysis process and providing opportunities to run reality checks on the findings and recommendations. Such request do, however, erode pre-established time schedules.

Some Reflections: As is clear from the preceding discussion, the conduct of descriptive studies is not an exact science, there are no set processes which if followed will guarantee good results. The quality of such studies is almost entirely people dependent. However, reflecting on the processes employed in this study, as well as similar efforts for The Ford Foundation, suggests that there are some necessary conditions which if present will contribute to the quality of such studies. These necessary conditions fall under four headings: (1) An experienced principal investigator; (2) a well-developed conceptual framework; (3) a carefully selected study team; (4) time and money. A brief discussion of each follows:

Experienced Principal Investigator: Successful implementation of descriptive studies requires a principal investigator with as broad and varied a background as the subject under study. In this case it meant having an understanding of rural schools, some knowledge

about the functioning of rural communities, how they differ from one part of the country to the next, and a broad experience in school improvement activities. The broader the background, the greater the depth of experience, the easier it is to get such a study off the ground, the less time is needed for doing the background work (a search of the literature and current practice), to establish the parameters of the study. With an experienced principal investigator, a wide network of contacts is available for both gathering information and gaining access to programs for study. Further, if the principal investigator is known for other credible studies, there is likely to be less resistance on the part of projects and communities to be included in the study.

Other characteristics of a principal investigator which help insure quality in a descriptive study are (1) the ability to conceptualize a structure for the study, (2) to select and work well with a team of people, (3) to write, and (4) sufficient administrative skills to work within a budget, establish and maintain a work schedule, make contacts and present study to both those who will be studied and those interested in knowing about the study.

Of the desired attributes listed above, a less than objective judgment would suggest that the principal investigator of this study was strong on past experience, knowledge of contacts, etc., fairly adequate on conceptualizing the study, on the weak side in writing, and had some things to learn about administering a federal/NIE contract.

The Conceptual Framework/Study Design: Broad scope studies such as this one require sufficient structure to keep it on track,

but not so much structure as to prevent collecting the kinds of information needed to adequately describe each program; enough uniformity in data collection to be able to make some cross project analysis without squeezing all programs into a uniform mold. What is needed is a framework which can give organization to the kinds of questions that need to be answered, a cognitive map for onsite inquiry.

Creating such a framework is a developmental process. The initial work must be done by the principal investigator, for without some idea of the boundaries of the study and the kinds of information to be gathered, one has no idea about what kind of team members will be needed to conduct the study.

Once the framework is fairly well in mind, however, and the various options for conducting the study have been laid out, team members should be selected and brought together for a work session to work out the details of the study design. This process not only takes advantage of the team's expertise but also achieves a level of ownership and common understanding of the purposes and conduct of the study difficult to obtain in any other way.

The above process worked well in this study, the only real problems resulted from the need to bring in additional team members during the course of the study. Having missed the original discussions, it was difficult to convey the same level of understanding to the new members. The active participation of Charles Thompson, NIE program officer, who had written the RFP, was very helpful. The best of writing can use elaboration to make sure the study responds to the objectives of the RFP.

Team Selection: In order to balance the broad generalist capabilities of the principal investigator, efforts were made to bring specific expertise to the study, expertise which would bring a depth of perspective to the important dimensions of the study as well as establishing a credibility for the results. The study met with considerable success in obtaining this expertise, obtaining the services of educators who had worked in and knew the literature on rural education and rural school improvement, an expert on community organization and the workings of local political and economic structures, and a policy analysist of education improvement programs. The different perspectives brought to the study by the team members made important contributions at all levels of the study, developing the conceptual framework, data gathering and the analysis.

A study which is descriptive in nature and designed to be useful to nonresearchers, e.g., policy makers, educators, community people interested in rural school improvement, cannot by design achieve validity from a research methodology. We were seeking instead to produce a study which would have a "face validity" with those who read it, a common sense logic which by helping the reader think through the problems leaves them saying, "Yes, that's right, that's the way it is," or,"That's a perspective that I hadn't considered before." Practitioners, those working in the field, are much more likely to be able to construct such arguments than those who view the world from more of a research/theoretical perspective.

As is clear from the above discussion, producing a good descriptive study requires experienced, well-seasoned practitioners who are found only among the ranks of employed/busy people. The work

demands of such studies, e.g., a high intensity of effort for short periods of time for work sessions, site visits and case study write-ups, plus the benefits of multiple perspectives, dictate the use of part-time consultants rather than a full-time staff of smaller numbers.

Time and money: Descriptive studies with the broad scope of this effort do not lend themselves to tight time schedules. At the time of proposal submission one can give only very rough estimates of what might be involved.

1. The area of investigation, e.g., "efforts to improve rural education", has no clear boundaries, it was therefore difficult to predict precisely how long it would take to get one's head around the topic, establish study parameters and begin formalizing a conceptual framework.

2. Team identification and selection ideally comes after the background work is fairly well along. However, freeing up the time of good people does not take place overnight.

3. Time needed for data collection and case study write-ups varies significantly from one project to the next and is related to both the complexity of the project and the capabilities of the team member writing the case. Estimates for time and therefore the money needed for consultant employment is an educated guess at best.

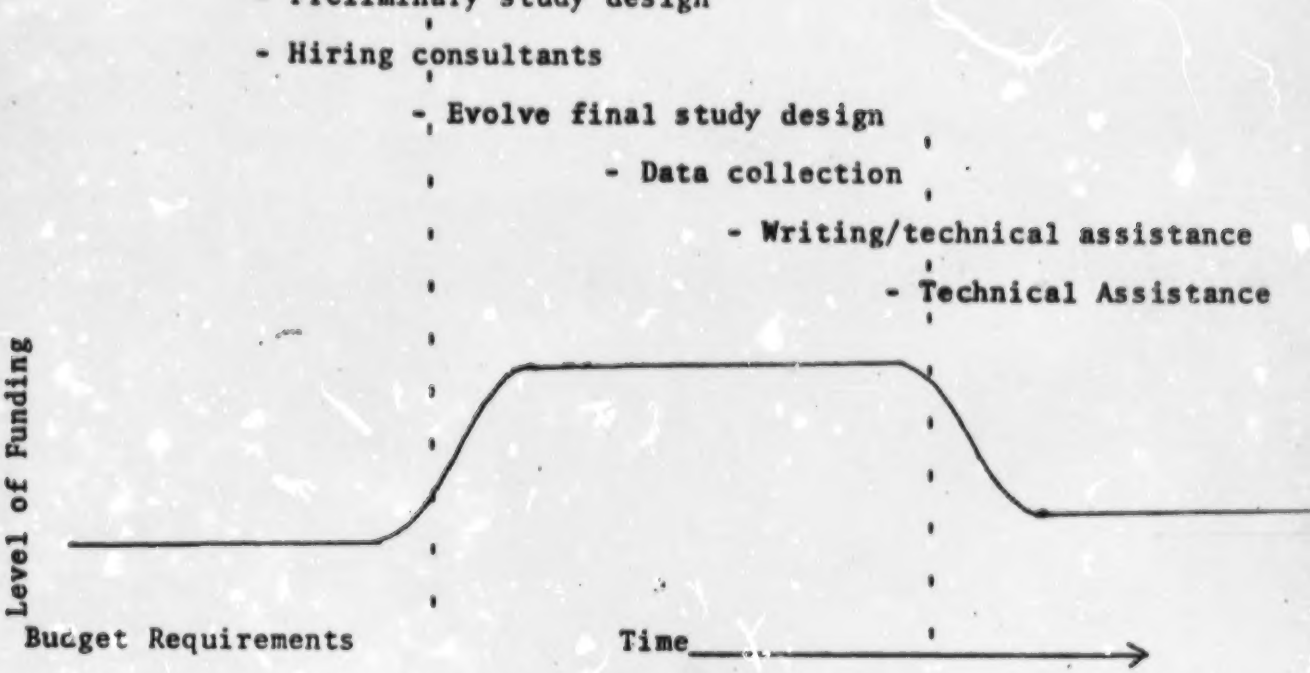
4. Establishing a calendar for site visits is dependent both on time availability of consultant and finding a suitable time for projects to be visited. Since studies of this type are essentially add-on tasks for the consultants and impositions upon ongoing routines for those being studied, holding to study deadlines becomes problematic.

The foregoing realities suggest either the need for more flexibility in the time frame of the study or a more pessimistic stance in making time projections. If one would schedule a fairly liberal time allowance and then increase it by one third, one might arrive at a fairly reasonable work schedule.

Insofar as time is money, the problems outlined above with regard to time also apply to accurate budget projections. One cannot predict beforehand exactly how many days of consultant time will be needed for site visits and case study write ups. Return visits may be needed to some sites and the complexity of some programs are such that a number of drafts may be needed on a particular case before one can say with any certainty that the story does indeed reflect the reality of the project. Experience from this project, where perhaps a third of the consultant work days will not be reimbursed, would suggest pessimistic budget projections, anticipating costs beyond what a traditionally tight budget would call for.

A budget which provides a relatively low level of expenditure during the early gearing up process, a high level of expenditure during the middle of the study to take care of consultants and travel for site visits, and then a relatively low level of funding to finish the writing and continue some technical assistance work would seem to be most appropriate.

An ideal time line and budget allocation might be sketched out as follows:



Combining Research and Technical Assistance: Combining research and technical assistance makes ultimate sense. One of the major criticisms of research efforts is that the findings never find their way into the hands of practitioners where they could make a difference. So for studies such as this which are designed to assist those in the field, some strategy for getting the findings to those that can make use of them is very necessary. The question is not so much if technical assistance and research should be combined, but how. It makes little sense to budget/plan for technical assistance before the data is coming in and there is something to base technical assistance on. The big demand in fact for technical assistance may

not come until the study is published and circulated in the field. Depending on the publishing process, this may not happen for some time after the study is finished. The most desirable arrangement might be to fund the study, provide for a very low level of technical assistance towards the end of the study and continuing through until the results get wide publicity. At that point a bit more funding may be needed to be able to respond to technical assistance demands.

Some Recommendations for Methodology for Future Rural Education Studies: The findings of this study suggest that the important issues of rural education/rural communities center more on the qualitative dimensions of rural schools and communities than on the quantitative dimensions. So in spite of the fact that descriptive studies such as this are messy and difficult to administer, they are likely to be more productive in terms of understanding how rural schools/rural communities operate and therefore provide more guidance in how to intervene in a useful way.

Since descriptive studies are so people dependent, the best way to improve the methodology of such studies is by systematically building on the expertise which such efforts produce. With experience, better matching of team members and project sites could be accomplished. In studies of rural education where schools and communities must be viewed as a whole, the assignment of a "community type" with an "education type" to do the data collection would make good sense.

There is also some evidence from this experience that with practice and experience the level of case study writing can be improved and perhaps done with greater efficiency.

An area where changes do need to be made to improve the implementation of descriptive studies is to either revise the contract restrictions on consultant pay and the ten-day limit for hiring consultants or significantly reduce the time it takes to get approval for exceeding those limitations. Both the $100/day pay rate and the ten-day limit are unrealistic for descriptive studies. The experienced people needed for such studies will not work for that amount and in almost all cases their services will be needed for longer periods of time. The delays in getting approval for exceeding these contract limits were a contributing factor to this study not meeting its deadlines.

Finally, to reemphasise a couple of points made earlier, good descriptive studies depend on good experienced personnel, personnel who are likely to have other full-time employment. Since their full-time responsibilities get highest priority, meeting tight project deadlines is likely to be a problem. The trade off appears to be "better quality" for problems of meeting deadlines. And budgeting for descriptive research, particularly a broad scope study such as this is very problematic. Without some flexibility to cover the need for return visits to some sites, to add sites, pay for additional consultant days, the quality of the end product will suffer. Expecting this kind of flexibility from a bureaucracy such as the federal government is not very realistic, the remaining option is to "over budget" both time and money to take care of such contingencies.

RURAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS - DATES OF PROJECTS

1955 | 1960 | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980

1957 Rocky Mt. Area Project
1962 Western States Small School Project

1957 Catskill Area Project in Small School Design

1960 (Texas Small Schools Project, Upper Midwest Small Schools Project, Southern Rural Education Improvement Project)

1965 ESEA-Title I-III, Headstart, ...

1965 Oregon Small Schools Project

1965 Teacher Corp

1966 Leadership Development Program

1966 Wisconsin R & D/IGE

1968 Kettering IDEA/IGE

1968 U. of No. Dak., New School

1969 Network

1971 Northwest Lab., Rural Ed. Program

1971 Urban/Rural O.E.

1972 Experimental Schools OE/NIE

1972 Coalition of Indian Controlled Schools

1973 Mountain Towns Teachers Center

- 1975 Southern Appalachian Training Program

1975 Chicano Ed. Program - Colorado

1977 PURE

APPENDIX A

RURAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Problem Solving Mode

Rational	Political	Legal
RMAP/WSSSP		
CASSP		
ESEA, Title I, Title III,		
O.S.S.P.		
Teacher Corp		
Leadership Development Program		
IDEA/IGE		
U. of No. Dak., New School		
Network	Northwest Lab/REP	
Experimental Schools		
	Urban Rural	
Mountain Towns Teacher Centers		
	Coalition of Indian Controlled Schools	
	SALT	
		Chicano Education Project
	People United for Rural Education	

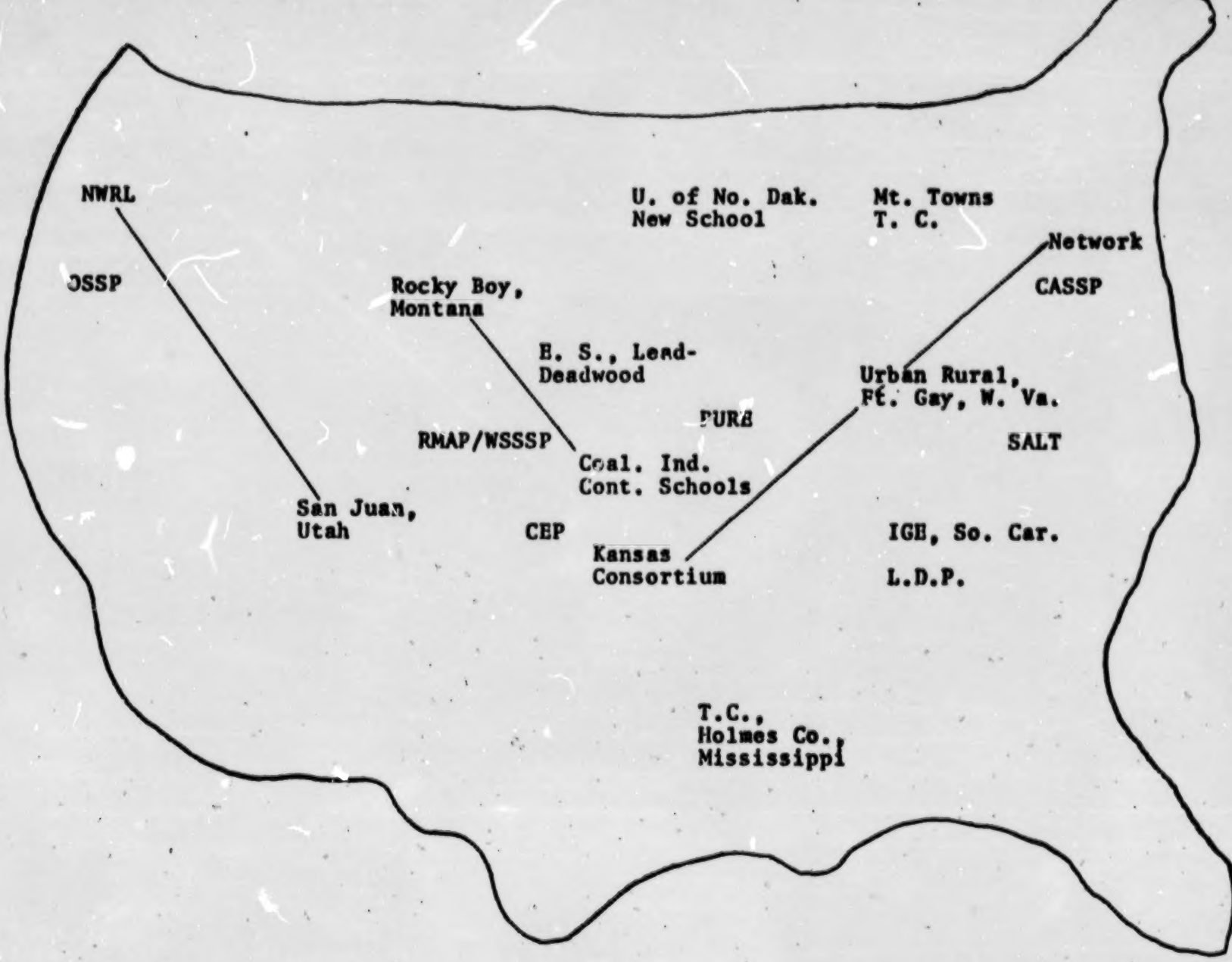
RURAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

(Where are the Levers for Change?)

Initiate/Implement New Programs	Develop New Organizational Processes	Access to Resources	People Development	Change Decision Making Processes/Shift Political Control/ Influence Policy
RMAP/WSSSP CASSP ESEA OSSP IDEA/IGE Experimental Schools		Network Cooperative Educational Service Agency	Teacher Corp Leadership Development Program Mountain Towns Teacher Centers	CEP FURE Northwest Lab. REP Coalition of Indian Controlled Schools

Urban/Rural

SALT


NWRL
U. of No. Dak.
New School
Mt. Towns
T. C.
Network
OSSP
Rocky Boy,
Montana
CASSP
E. S., Lead-
Deadwood
Urban Rural,
Ft. Gay, W. Va.
RURA
RMAP/WSSSP
SALT
Coal. Ind.
Cont. Schools
San Juan,
Utah
CEP
IGE, So. Car.
Kansas
Consortium
L.D.P.
T.C.,
Holmes Co.,
Mississippi

ROCKY MOUNTAIN AREA PROJECT FOR SMALL HIGH SCHOOLS (DENVER)/WESTERN STATES SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT, PHOENIX, DENVER, RENO, SANTA FE, SALT LAKE CITY.

Dates: 1957 - 1969

Funding: The Ford Foundation
USOE/Career Education

Participants: RMAP, SEA and 20 LEA sites; WSSSP, SEAs of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah and 15 to 20 LEAs in each state.

Strategy: The implementation of new approaches to instruction and school organization including multiple class teaching, individualization of instruction, computer scheduling, use of technology, correspondence courses, new curricula, career education using community resources. Participants were involved in summer workshops with nationally recognized consultants and local university personnel. The coordinators of the WSSSP and project directors of each state provided support, technical assistance and served as linking agents to resources in other project schools as well as to experts across the country. Project is no longer formally in existance. Many of the educators participating in the project are still working at the LEA and SEA level.

CATSKILL AREA PROJECT IN SMALL SCHOOL DESIGN

Dates: 1957 - (Some aspects of program, i.e., Gifted Youth Seminar still in existance.)

Funding: The Ford Foundation.
LEA support.

Participants: State University of New York, Oneonita, New York.
22 LEAs in Catskill Mountain Region.

Strategy: Implementation of multiple classes, supervised correspondence courses, flexible schedules, school aides, electronic communication, shared services and a Gifted Youth Seminar. Individuals from Columbia Teachers College, Oneonita State and nationally known consultants were used for workshops and teacher training. The Catskill Area School Study Council still exists with Lawrence Heldman of State University as executive secretary. The Saturday Seminar Program (formerly Gifted Youth Seminar) is now in its 21st year of operation, inservice programs are continuing but with many modifications.

OREGON SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

Dates: 1965 -

Funding: ESEA Title V (1965)
Title III (1966-1974)
LEA memberships (1974-), (non-profit corporation)

Participants: SEA
LEAs with fewer than 200 enrolled in high school and feeder elementary schools. Current membership 121 out of 215 eligible districts.

Strategy: Sponsors annual week-long small schools summer institute. Sessions conducted by outside consultants as well as member teachers and administrators. Small school specialist position which was added to the Department of Education when federal dollars were available has now been discontinued, however, SEA staff member still serves as executive secretary for Small Schools Advisory Committee and the Oregon Small Schools Association. OSSP provides a communication vehicle for small school personnel breaking down the isolation of rural communities and serves to keep the needs of small schools before the state Department of Education and the state legislature.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Dates: 1966 - 1975±

Funding: The Ford Foundation

Participants: The Ford Foundation, Regional offices in the Northeast (Farmington, Maine); Southeast (Atlanta, Georgia); Southwest (Albuquerque, New Mexico); and Region-at-Large (Wheat Ridge, Colorado). Approximately 70 fellows a year for nine years.

Strategy: Identified and helped develop emerging leadership in schools and rural communities (generally from minority populations) via a program of individual fellowships. Fellows selected pursued programs designed to foster personal growth by combining activities such as apprenticeships, travel, visits to model projects, work experience, independent study, research and writing. Fellowships provided salary equivalent and expenses. Regional representatives carried responsibility for identifying potential candidates, carrying out the selection process, assisting in program development, monitoring the program year and follow-up after the fellowship year.

INDIVIDUALLY GUIDED EDUCATION

Dates: 1966 Wisconsin R & D Center
1968 Kettering-/I/D/E/A/

Funding: USOE
Kettering Foundation
Sears Roebuck Foundation
LEAs

Participants: Wisconsin R & D Center; Kettering Foundation; Institute for Development of Educational Activities/Individually Guided Education (/I/D/E/A/-IGE); SEAs; LEAs (3300 sites work with the R & D Center) (1400 sites work with /I/D/E/A/) approximately 1/4 of which are rural.

Strategy: The strategy calls for a nationwide network for the development of a comprehensive system of schooling designed to provide self-renewal for teachers as well as learning experiences tailored to individual pupil capabilities and educational objectives. The R & D Center strategy depends more on the development of classroom materials to achieve these results, /I/D/E/A/ pursues more of a process approach which involves local staff members in the identification of needs, the development of teaching teams and the adaptation of existing materials to individualized instruction. Networks have been established to provide support and technical assistance.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA NEW SCHOOL OF BEHAVIORAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Dates: 1968 -

Funding: USOE
State of North Dakota

Participants: University of North Dakota;
Individual teachers and school districts of the state, most of which would be considered to be rural.

Strategy: Created in response to a study of the Legislative Research Committee, the basic thrust of the New School Program is to prepare experienced and prospective teachers who are better equiped, both psychologically and academically, to individualize and personalize the instructional programs in their classrooms. With large numbers of elementary teachers lacking the four-year degree (59% in 1966) a major effort has been made to upgrade existing teacher competency through a cooperative teacher exchange allowing practicing teachers to continue their education through temporary replacements by New School graduates. The teacher training program is characterized by a well-articulated "developmental" philosophy emphasizing an integrated approach to instruction both at the university level and in the elementary classroom.

THE NETWORK

Dates: 1969 -

Funding: USOE
NIE

Participants: Network (a non-profit educational service organization);
LEAs (some of which are rural; the four sites of the Kansas component of the Consortium are all rural);
Child Service Demonstration Centers.

Strategy: An educational service conglomerate, Network seeks to help educational systems and their members to develop an increased problem solving capacity, increase their systematic use of appropriate resources and work together collaboratively. Component parts include the Massachusetts Diffusion Assistance Project, National Learning Disabilities Assistance Project; NE/Mid-Atlantic PIP (Project Information Packages) Diffusion Project, Network (which provides training workshops and consulting contracts with local schools) and the Consortium, a nationwide program linking local schools to proven reading programs.

THE NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LAB.
RURAL EDUCATION PROJECT

Dates: 1971 -

Funding: Office of Education/National Institute of Education

Participants: Northwest Lab.
Development work with selected rural communities in Montana, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska. Full scale pilot project in San Juan County, Utah.

Strategy: Based on the premise that people affected by decisions should have the opportunity to influence and/or participate in making those decisions, REP developed processes for involving larger segments of the rural community in the educational decision making process. Aided by REP trained process facilitators, school community groups are formed composed of community leaders/opinion makers and school personnel. SCG's are then given assistance in problem solving skills, i.e., identifying educational needs, proposing possible solutions, working with school officials to implement those solutions.

URBAN/RURAL PROGRAM

Dates: 1971 -

Funding: HEW/Office of Education

Participants: Leadership Training Institute, Center for Educational Research, Stanford. Fourteen urban sites. Rural sites included Bacon County, Georgia; Bayfield, Wisconsin; Clay County, Tennessee; Crystal City, Texas; Fort Gay, West Virginia; Galena, Kansas; Hays/Lodge Pole, Montana; Lakeland, Pennsylvania; Neah Bay, Washington; San Luis, Colorado; Sodus, New York; Wise County, Virginia.

Strategy: Conceived at the heighthof the civil rights efforts and caught in the reality of declining enrollments and teacher surpluses, Urban/Rural attended to the problems of the most impoverished segments of society through a strategy of community control and inservice education. School community councils were formed and were to be given parity in educational decisions concerning the kinds of inservice education programs needed for teachers to improve educational programs for inner city and rural children.

RURAL EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Date: 1972 - 1978

Funding: OE/NIE

Participants: NIE, Craig, Alaska; Quilcene, Washington; South Umpqua, Oregon; Carbon County, Wyoming; Wilcox, Arizona; Lead-Deadwood, So. Dakota; Supervisory Union #58, N.H.; Constantine, Michigan; Hancock County, Kentucky; Perry County, Mississippi.

Strategy: A comprehensive program of school reform which included:

- A fresh approach to the nature and substance of the total curriculum in light of local needs and goals;

- Reorganization and training of staff to meet particular project goals;

- Innovative use of time, space and facilities;

- Active community involvement in developing, operating and evaluating the proposed project; and

- An administrative and organizational structure to support the project and to take into account local strengths and needs.

Each Experimental Schools Project was expected to serve the entire enrollment of the school district, from kindergarten through grade 12.

COALITION OF INDIAN CONTROLLED SCHOOLS

Dates: 1972 -

Funding: HEW/Office of Education Indian Education Act, Participant memberships.

Participants: Denver based headquarters and 87+ member organizations across the country including local community boards that control their own schools, parent advisory committees who have organized to gain control, Johnson O'Mally committees, tribal education committees, and Indian controlled colleges and universities.

Strategy: A technical assistance group which works to improve education for Indian people by helping them gain control over their own education. This may take the form of deannexation and forming their own school system, getting representation on white dominated boards, pressing for better use of Indian education monies. The Coalition holds training seminars, provides onsite assistance, conducts research, serves as clearing house for information.

MOUNTAIN TOWNS TEACHER CENTER

Dates: 1973 -

Funding: ESEA Title III, IVc

Participants: Mountain Towns Teacher Center, Wilmington, Vermont;
Cooperative Day Care Center, Dover, Vermont;
Deerfield Valley Elem., Wilmington, Vermont;
Dover Elem. School, Dover, Vermont;
GARED School, West Dover, Vermont;
Green Meadows School, Wilmington, Vermont;
Halifax School, Halifax, Vermont;
Marlboro School, Marlboro, Vermont;
Meetinghouse Nursery, Marlboro, Vermont;
Readsboro School, Readsboro, Vermont;
Rowe School, Rowe, Massachusetts;
Stamford School, Stamford, Vermont;
Townshend Elem. School, Townshend, Vermont;
Wardsboro School, Wardsboro, Vermont;
Whitingham School, Whitingham, Connecticut;
Wilmington High School, Wilmington, Vermont.

Strategy: Provides staff development for participating teachers in ten small communities in the mountains of Southwest Vermont via workshops, formal course work and inclassroom advisory assistance. The Center provides access to curriculum materials, a friendly place for people to learn from each other, a community lecture series and a Xerox machine.

SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Dates: 1975 -

Funding: The Ford Foundation

Participants: Center for Community Change, Washington, D.C. (Appalachian based staff); Highlander Research and Education Center, New Market, Tennessee. Forty-four fellows through June, 1977, representing the states of West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia.

Strategy: Recognizing that the normal tendencies of the socio/political system to protect the interests of a relatively small elite are even more severe in Appalachia, SALT is designed to help develop people outside-the-system who will create the climate and demand necessary to stimulate social change particularly in the public schools. SALT works toward that end by (1) identifying and supporting a small but growing cadre of community based leaders, (2) helping to raise their consciousness about issues and institutions which impact their community, (3) helping them to acquire the information, skills and confidence needed to deal with public institutions, especially the schools. Workshops/training sessions and on site assistance are provided for participants who receive short term (6 months or less) fellowships which provide a degree of financial support and expense money.

CHICANO EDUCATION PROJECT

Dates: 1975 -

Funding: Carnegie Foundation

Participants: Chicano Education Project, Lakewood, Colorado, works with communities in the state which have large Chicano populations, particularly in the San Luis Valley and Southwest Colorado.

Strategy: CEP pursues a strategy of community organization, political activism and legal action to further the cause of education for Chicanos. Targets have been the passage and monitoring of the implementation of Colorado's Bilingual Education Act; a legal challenge to the state finance program; school desegregation issues; Title I implementation and improving migrant education programs. Their publication, "Un Nuevo Dia", reports on CEP activities and presents timely articles relating to Chicano education from across the country.

PEOPLE UNITED FOR RURAL EDUCATION

Dates: 1977 -

Funding: Participant membership.

Participants: Parents, teachers, administrators, senators and representatives, university personnel. Membership now over a thousand representing 121 school districts.

Strategy: "The purpose of the organization is to promote the qualities inherant in rural education and to pursue educational excellence that will enhance rural community life." More specifically, PURE is concerned with preventing legislative action which will force more school consolidation and encouraging legislative changes in the school finance structure which presently penalizes small schools.

PURE publishes a periodic newsletter and is holding its first state convention on February 2 and 3, 1978.

RELATED RURAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Booklet on Alaska Indian Education Laws and Alaska Education Statutes (decentralization of State Operated School System) prepared for lay native readers.

David Getches, Attorney
Getches & Green
1500 28th Street
Boulder, Colorado
(303) 442-2021

"Centreville", A Rural Education Decision Making Model

Christopher Clarke and Michael Fischler
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, New Hampshire 03264

Center for Rural Education
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois 62901 (618) 453-2415

(Needs assessment of public schools in 31 southernmost counties in Illinois)

Dr. Morris Lamb
Dr. John R. Evans

Ivan Muse, Director of Rural Education
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

(Preservice Programs for Educational Personnel Going Into Rural Schools, March 1977)

"Goodbye to Yesterday: Talent Development in a Changing Era", Gordon Hoke, Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

(A case study of Effingham, Illinois. the changes resulting from the construction of two interstate highways which junction at this small rural community.)

Cost of Education Indices Among School Districts. Education Finance Center, Education Commission of States.

(Study of school costs in Missouri which shows the financial optimal size for school districts in that state to be 2,500 students.)

Policy Making in Rural Education Institutions

- Policy Making in Rural Education Institutions: An Annotated Bibliography, Joan Roos Egner and Deborah Rossol Friedman.

New York State Rural School Boards: Who Serves?
Ann M. Wasserstrom M. S. Thesis.

Cornell University
Agricultural Experiment Station/Dept. of Education
Ithica, New York 14853
(607) 256-5420

Rand Policy Study of Impact of Federal Monies on Rural Education.

John Pencus
Gail Boss

OTHER RURAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

WHICH NEED TO BE CONSIDERED

- Migrant Education Program
  Gloria Mattera, Director
  Geneseo Migrant Center
  Geneseo, New York 14454

- Desegregation site

- Intermediate unit
  Northeast Cooperative Education Service Agency
  Athens, Georgia

- Partnership for Rural Improvement
  Spokane Fall Community College
  Vickie Braglio

APPENDIX B

Design Work Session, January 30-31, 1978

I. Purpose of Study:

--To gain a deeper understanding of rural America's schools and communities, the problems that confront them, and ways of improving their capacity to attack those problems. The results of the research to be disseminated to policy makers and practitioners to sensitize them to both the difficulties and the potential of rural improvement strategies.

- To contribute to NIE's School Capacity for Problem Solving Groups' research and development agendas by identifying further research, experimentation, and approaches to technical assistance that will improve the problem solving capacity of rural schools.

- To contribute to the research agenda of NIE as a whole by illuminating the particular condition and problems of rural education.

II. The Outcomes:

From the examination of a number of past or nearly completed improvement efforts in a number of settings, at least five outcomes should emerge:

A. A delineation of several major approaches to improving rural education, with an emphasis on those which aim to build rural schools' and systems' ability to address their own problems;

B. A description and interpretation of what happened when some of these approaches were implemented in particular settings, including some assessment of the results of the effort;

C. A mosaic or composite picture of America's rural schools and communities, with the problems that confront

them and the conditions that affect efforts to solve these problems displayed prominently in the foreground;

D. A sense of which improvement approaches or combinations of approaches would be appropriate and effective in what kinds of settings, again with emphasis on capacity building strategies;

E. A set of recommended lines of inquiry into ways of improving rural education and the critical conditions affecting improvement efforts, with an emphasis on school systems' capacity for problem solving and ways of building such capacity.

These outcomes will be expressed in three principal forms:

- A book for a general audience of people interested in rural education and its improvement. The book will address in a lively and readable style and format, at least the first four outcomes above.

- An attractively produced summary of the main findings of the study. The summary will be circulated to selected people in the audiences listed above.

- A report to NIE focusing on the fifth outcome, recommended lines of inquiry into the improvement of rural education, emphasizing approaches to building problem solving capacity. The report will grow out of the book and will indicate how the analysis presented in the book points toward the recommendations.*

*Excerpted from NIE RFP.

The work session began with a discussion of the above purposes and expected outcomes of the study, particularly the need to produce a book presented in a "lively and readable style". Various opinions were expressed on how best to craft such a document given the content, i.e., a wide ranging set of strategies implemented in very diverse community settings, and the procedures for data collection, i.e., a select group of expert observers/analyists/interviewers (yes, all of the above) who bring to the task a variety of backgrounds and perspectives on rural education and rural communities. Borrowing from the Experimental Schools experience, a logical format would include (1) a historical section to provide the setting, (2) a presentation of the framework upon which to hang the case studies, (3) a series of case studies, (4) a critical analysis of those case studies perhaps involving separate presentations by experts in the field and (5) a summary section with major lessons and recommendations prepared by the principal investigator with assistance from those involved in the site visits. The key to making the publication "lively and readable" as well as informative will be to avoid the hodgepodge characteristics found in many multi-authored documents while preserving the richness of information presented by disparate site reviews.

III. Parameters of the study:

The study is obviously not a definitive work on all of rural education, but rather a careful look at selected/representative examples of formal efforts to improve rural education in a wide

range of community settings. It is clear that some segments of rural education are sufficiently unique and complex to deserve separate attention and therefore will be given only tangential treatment as they relate to the major themes of the study. Rural education in Alaska, Hawaii, the trust territories; Indian education as conducted by the BIA would fall within this category. School consolidation as a school improvement strategy will not be included avoiding duplication of the recent study by Jonathan Sher. Also excluded from the first formal round of the field work will be the small bootstrap improvement efforts. Although these efforts could make an important contribution to the study, there is not yet sufficient information about the universe of such projects and therefore no way to adequately sample those endeavors. (Charles Thompson suggested the possibility of finding a few additional dollars to get a better handle on this arena of small school improvement activity. If the area can be given some definition it may well be included in the scope of the second year's work.)

IV. Selection of Sites:

Using a historical listing of major small school improvement efforts (see attached list), two sets of criteria were generated for use in selecting sites for the study. The first set of criteria is concerned with "how problems facing rural education get defined", the second being "the characteristics of a community" in which the strategy was implemented to resolve a particular set of problems.

B. Community Characteristics - Rural America is characterized by its diversity along a number of dimensions. Those dimensions identified as being important to this study include:

1. Nature of the economic base:
   - Presence of a dominant industry;
   - Seasonal economy, i.e., agricultural, recreation;
   - Economic range represented in population;
   - Declining/growing economy;
   - Stability of economic base;
   - Relationship to political power.
2. Power structure:
   - Indigenous to community? to state?
   - Concentrated with limited access or diffuse with broad access?
   - Relationship to economic base, prominent families...
3. Population:
   - Ethnicity/cultural divergence from mainstream;
   - Permanence (how long does it take for newcomers to get accepted?)
   - Growth rate?
   - "Sophistication".
4. Geography:
   - Location within the United States;
   - Isolation/accessability (natural barriers, distances from services, resources, urban centers, media).

5. Value system(s):

- Importance of religious beliefs in the life of the community;
- General political persuasion;
- Educational ideology.

Using these two sets of criteria, projects and sites were selected as per attached listing.

V. Data Collection:

The heart of the study will be a series of case studies, most of which will require site visits (up to five days per site, including travel) by a team of two and in some cases three people. In each instance one person of the team will be assigned responsibility for preparation of the case study, drawing on the notes of and in consultation with the other team member(s). As per the RFP, sources of data will include... "(1) interviews with a broad range of people who conceived and implemented the efforts, people directly or indirectly affected by them and people whose training and experience equip them to offer special insights into the problem of improving rural education, and on (2) existing documents that describe, interpret, evaluate and critique the school improvement efforts."

Each case study should include information about (1) the community, (2) the school, and (3) the intervention. More specifically, the kinds of data to be included are as follows:

Community:

- Basic profile data including those characteristics used for selection of projects (IV. B above);

- Native/newcomer dynamics;
- Major exogenous events;
- History of school comunity relations;
- Expectations for schools, i.e., academic/vocational, preparation to stay in community vs. migrate to urban centers;

School System:

- Size and location;
- Number of units;
- Who does it serve?
- Staff background - years of experience, rural/urban;
- Leadership - length of tenure - appointed or elected - style - career lines;
- School board - who serves, how selected, tenure...;
- Level of financial support and percent of sources (local/state/federal) (including patterns);
- Relation to institutions of higher education;
- Systems outcomes data/where do the students go, what do they do? (Reliability?);
- Consolidation history;
- School/community relations;
- Federal project history;
- Propensity to innovate;
- Change/stability rhythms;
- Presence of central staff for planning, evaluation, curriculum development; (Level as well as kind.);
- Major exogenous pressures.

The Intervention:

There are three areas/dimensions of the intervention which need to be explored, some of which overlap.

1. Origins of intervention:
   - Who defines the problem(s) and how? (Overt/covert);
   - Who provides the money and how much?

		Problem Definition: Local	Problem Definition: External
Who Provides Money?	Local	1	2
	External	3	4

2. Development of project over time:
   - Phases (see attached ELOC model as reference), what stages has the program gone through, where is it now, what were the important events in each stage?
3. Intervention qualities/characteristics:
   - Sharpness of focus (over time);
   - "Fit" between problem definition & solution;
   - Scope/centrality of intervention re the ongoing school program;
   - General orientation of intervention, i.e., problem solving vs. opportunism;
   - Implementation strategies - kind of planning, support/training;
   - Process/product outcomes continuum;
   - Expectations over time;
   - Characteristics over time, additions/deletions/exploring/transforming/extensions;
   - Consonance/discrepancy with realities of school community

setting, i.e., values, expectations---modus operendi.

VI. Field Work Assignments. Your preferences for field work have been laid out below. Primary responsibility for writing up the case studies for each visit are indicated with an asterisk.

FIELD WORK ASSIGNMENTS

(Negotiable, up to a point)

	Branscome	Cromer	Dunne	McLaughlin	Nachtigal	Thompson
~~1. WSSSP~~	X Meeker			X ~~Arizona~~		X*
~~2. Teacher Corps~~		X	X		X*	
3. IGE		X*			X	X ?
~~4. UND~~			X*		X	
5. RDU		X NE Ga. CESA		X* Kansas		X
~~6. NDN~~		X*			X	
~~7. REP~~	X*				X	
~~8. Urban/ Rural~~	X*				X	
~~9. E.S.~~			X*		X	
10. CICSB					X*	
11. SALT	X					X*
12. CEP					X*	
13. PURE			X*		X	X
14. PRI					X*	

*Responsible for case study

Charles: Feel free to add projects as you have time and interest.

RURAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AND SITES TO BE INCLUDED IN STUDY

	(Problem Definition)								(Site)	(Community Characteristics)				
Intervention	Tech. Inad.	Pers. Underdev.	Lack of Prob. Solv.	Insuf. Resources	Power Ineq.	Cult. Underdev.	Econ. Underdev.	Func. Isol.		Econ.	Power	Pop.	Geography	Values
1. WSSSP*	X					X			Meeker Sahuarita	Ranching-Energy-	Big land owners	Anglo Estab.? Growth & Energy	Rocky Mtn. West. Isolated Southwest	Frontier/ conservative
2. Teacher Corps*	X	X							Holmes Co., Mississippi	Agric./ Depressed		Black	Deep South Isolated	
3. IGE/ IDEA*	X	X	X						(Minn.?)					
4. UND*		X							(Indian & Anglo Comm.)					
5. RDU*	X	X	X						Georgia/ Kansas	Agric.		Anglo/Black Anglo	So/Mid./W. Isolated	
6. NDN*	X	X	X						Maine	Lumber Farming Mill towns		Anglo Fr. Can.	N.E. Isolated	
7. REP*			X		X				Eastern Wash.	Lumber		Anglo/Ind.	N.W.	
8. Urban/ Rural*		X			X				Ft. Gay, W. Va.	Coal	Tight Control	Anglo	Appal. Isolated	Fundamental
9. E.S.*	X					X			So. Umpqua	Mining Lumber		Anglo	West Mod. Isol.	Conservative
10. CICSB	X	X		X	X							Indian	Midwest Isolated	
11. SALT*					X		X						Appal.	
12. CEP					X				S.W. Colo.	Agric.	Controlled	Anglo/ Chicano	Rocky Mtn. Isolated	
13. PURE*				X	X				Latimer, Iowa	Agric.	Open	Anglo	Midwest	
14. PRI								X	Neighboring Dist. to Spokane, Wash	Agric. Lumber		Growing	N.W./fringes of urban growth	

*Requiring site visits

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